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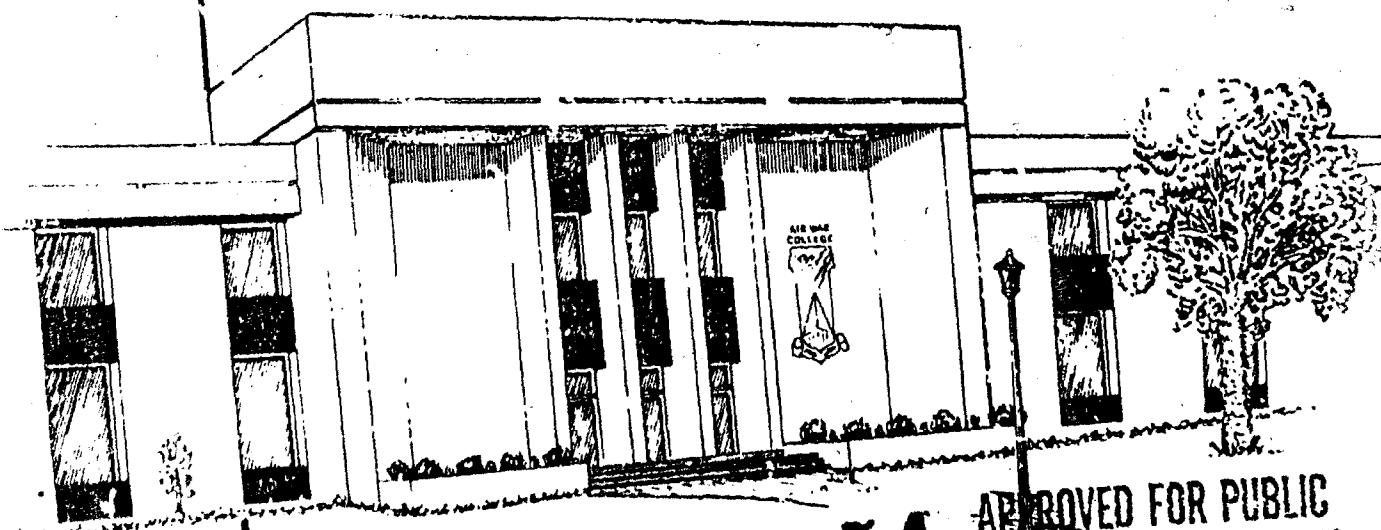
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INSURGENCY: A FORMIDABLE
THREAT TO PHILIPPINE SECURITY

COLONEL SESINANDO C. CANDING

1988



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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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INSURGENCY

A FORMIDABLE THREAT TO PHILIPPINE SECURITY

by

Sesinando C. Canding

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Thesis Advisor: Colonel David G. Kimball

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Insurgency, The Most Formidable Threat to Philippine Security
Author: Sesinando C. Canding, Colonel, PAF

→ A critical analysis of past events, attempted solutions, and the underlying assumptions in the past studies of the problem of insurgency in the Philippines is provided by the research paper. It addresses the characteristic and dynamics of the insurgency problem by determining and analyzing the factors which have been responsible for creating the situations which brought about insurgency. From the root cause, the author traced the events which complicated the issues involved. The impact of the colonial powers which dominated the country for more than 400 years were shown to have played the greater part. As the paper concluded that insurgency is the most formidable threat to the Philippine national security, it recommends a holistic solution involving efforts by the whole machinery of the Philippine Government as necessary to stop the threat. (Stu). X

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Sesinando C. Canding, Philippine Air Force (MNSA, National Defense College of the Philippines) was a Wing Commander in a PAF base in Southern Philippines where the AFP is actively engaging the Muslim rebels. He has served in the Headquarters of the Philippine Air Force and the General Headquarters, Armed Forces of the Philippines, as Operations Officer. He is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy. He finished Squadron Officer Course in the Philippines and completed ACSC in Maxwell. He is a member of Class 88 of the Air War College.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Third World countries, beset by the problem of insurgency, have common backgrounds and share almost the same past experiences. Most of them have at one time been colonies of present or past powerful nations. There are recorded histories of their struggles for independence from the previous rulers. However, once independence was gained, the countries remained within the protective hegemony and tutelage of their colonizers. They have had short periods of peace and stability that interchanged with both peaceful and violent changes of government. In all these events, the assistance and role played by their former colonizers were readily apparent. Because of this, the factors that inflame violent changes in these insurgency-prone nations became more susceptible to the machinations of either side of the bipolar world.

The Philippines is one of these countries. Today it faces an insurgency problem that increases in gravity along with economic troubles. Both problems, insurgency and economic, are so intertwined nobody can be sure which causes the other. Many theorize that solving the economic ills of the country will automatically resolve the causes that spawn insurgency. Others likewise believe that no economic development will come unless the rural areas are cleared of the insurgent rebels. This is not difficult to understand as the military activities directed against the insurgents compete for resources which are also needed for economic activities.

Objective and Method of the Research Paper

This paper hopes to critically analyze the insurgency problem

in the Philippines and develop a workable approach to the problem. The critical analysis will build on past studies, proposed and implemented solutions, and the underlying assumptions. It will furthermore focus on the problem in the light of the new developments that have recently changed the dimensions of the issue. It will also consider other factors and historical perspectives not previously considered, but which contemporary developments have shown to be relevant. In other words, while this study builds on previous similar experiences, it shall also question issues which were used as a basis for past actions.

Defining The Problem

Insurgency is a social conflict with politico-economic dimensions. To address insurgency in a broad context will be far beyond the ability of this author due to constraints of time and availability of data. Instead, this paper will approach the subject more specifically and definitely in the narrower context of a particular nation's setting. This delineation of scope is important to prevent this study from encountering the same difficulty other authors have encountered in trying to find a solution to the same problem. While one may find a common framework for conceptualizing the insurgency problem, the circumstances in each country where insurgency presents itself, and the nature and cause factors of such circumstances may be different. More often than not, these circumstances are fashioned by the character, values, and mores of the people, who in the same manner are also affected by circumstances and events often not of their own making and far beyond their control.

The main thesis, therefore, of this research work is that there

is a web of interlocking factors which make the insurgency problem in the Philippines very complex. There is a need therefore to break the chain that binds these factors together to find the solutions to the problem. This paper proposes that the answers to the following questions will help to fully understand the complexities of the problem:

What are the true nature and character of Philippine insurgency? What are its causes? How have the nature of these causes changed from their original forms?

Why have past efforts failed? What were the defects and failings of past strategies?

What must be done to permanently end the problem? Is it possible? How can it be made possible?

Significance Of The Research

Insurgency has been with the Philippines since it obtained its independence in 1946. It managed to tone down the problem in the early '50s up to about the early '60s. For a while the Free World thought the Philippines had found the answer to communist insurgency. The United States, as the professed champion of democracy in the bipolar world of this period gloried in the success of the Philippines. The Philippine example was cited as a model for fighting insurgencies in other countries. However, insurgency is still a problem in the Philippines. The recent growth in size of the insurgency may reflect that the approach in the past merely removed the symptoms, but failed to uproot the seeds of the problem. It is also possible that past efforts in fact addressed the real causes, but the subsequent actions failed to institutionalize the changes. With this in mind, the importance of the study lies in the need for a more holistic

analysis of insurgency in order to formulate the right solution to the right problem.

A further value of this research is to provide students of war an understanding of another type of warfare that has become a fad in the conflict between the two sides of a bipolar world. The proliferation of destructive nuclear weapons and the concomittant destruction they portend have convinced superpowers of the limitations on their use. The rivalry continues, however, and the resort to warfare on the low-intensity side of the war spectrum becomes very logical and attractive.

The importance of the study to the United States cannot be overemphasized. Any change of government in the Philippines will endanger the future of American investments and trade relations. Even without the insurgents taking over, the bases are already an issue. A communist takeover would bring an immediate loss of the bases. The strategic location of the Philippines in the Pacific makes the bases a bulwark of American presence, especially at present when the Russians have a foothold in the Indo-China peninsula.

Research Methodology

Research of the problem involves analyses of reported events, current news, and literature on the subject. Theses on the subject by previous students at US Armed Services' schools which were available were used as documents either to support the author's propositions, rebut current thinking on the matter, or show inconsistencies. In this respect, this study can be considered a historical research. In the sense, however, that academic truths and knowledges have been cited as proofs, the research is also a conceptual paper.

Most of the material used was found in the Air University Library. Situational Briefs were obtained from the Philippine Embassy in Washington, DC. Reading materials issued by Air War College were also used. Most importantly, the study draws much from my personal experiences and observations.

Definitions of Terms Used

To be clear about the usage of terms the following definitions are used:

Insurgency - A social conflict that transcends the economic-political relationship between the government and a sector of society over which the former governs. It is:

a protracted political military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal organizations.¹

Insurgent - Interchangeably used with the terms, guerilla, rebel, or subversive. It refers to a member of an insurgency movement, either armed or unarmed. Its activities include, but are not limited to, "guerilla warfare, terrorism, political mobilization like propaganda, recruitment, front and covert party organization and international activities."²

Counterinsurgency - "All military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat subversive insurgency."³

CHAPTER II

THE TYPES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND DYNAMICS
OF PHILIPPINE INSURGENCY

In order to be objective in the pursuit of a workable approach to the insurgency problem in the Philippines, we will have to look deeply into its nature, characteristics, and dynamics. Insurgency is not new in the Philippines. Even before its independence in 1946, insurgency was used by earlier Filipinos. Filipinos fought as insurgents for their freedom against Spain, the United States, and Japan. As a result a stereotype has been attached to the Filipinos: they are naturally rebellious and rebelling for any grievance is in their nature.¹

Types of Insurgency in Philippine Setting

We will begin with examining the nature of Philippine insurgency by first classifying the types of insurgency that are recognizable. In general there are two types.

First is the secessionist insurgency; a type of rebellion with an objective to cut off a piece of Philippine territory and to declare it independent. It is this type of insurgency that is being waged by the Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao and other smaller islands in the Southern Philippines.

The second type, which the most formidable problem, is the communist insurgency. It aims to overthrow the present government and establish a communist form of government. This may be considered as the resurgent Hukbalahaps (Hukbong Laban sa Hapon or Huk) and HMBs (Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan). The Huks were suppressed by the late President Magsaysay in 1954 and reemerged as HMBs in the

early 1960s. It became the New People's Army (NPA) in the late '60s as the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

There is a third type but it is a variant and offshoot of the communist insurgency. The Cordillera People's Liberation Army under the renegade priest, Father Conrado Balweg, operates in the Cordillera mountain areas in Northeastern Luzon. It champions the lot of the minority groups in the area who were victims of the onslaught of development projects during the incumbency of President Marcos. Foremost among these projects is the Chico River Dam, the construction of which caused the displacement of the native residents from their ancestral lands and the desecration of the burial grounds of their ancestors. Initially the group started as communist insurgents. Under the leadership of Father Balweg they later shifted to a secessionist objective; the grant of autonomy in the region. The new constitution promulgated after the People's Revolution in 1986 implemented the demand of this group of insurgents in a provision granting autonomous status to specific regions of the country.

Characteristics of Insurgency

Insurgency is characterized by the use of unconventional methods and irregular forces who in most cases are indigenous to the area where they operate. They travel light and move around fast. They never stay in one place longer than necessary to demonstrate to the people their freedom to move around and their invulnerability to government forces.

The communist insurgents of the New People's Army roam the rural areas of the Philippines staging hit-and-run attacks on government forces. Their propaganda promises of equality and prosperity in a

land that has known little of either. They exploit grievances that were supposedly addressed by government development projects many years back. Where their primary operating areas were previously the Central Plains of Luzon and the bigger islands in Central Visayas, they have now extended their operations to the island of Mindanao where they coexist with the muslim secessionist rebels.²

The Muslim rebellion in the south broke out almost at the same time as President Marcos' declaration of Martial Law in 1972. The seeds of its onset have been planted many years before by neglect of the Central Government in Manila to develop the Muslim regions in the Southern Philippines. There are other more deep-seated causes that will be discussed later in this paper. There were other short-lived rebellions in the past, such as that of the tribe of Hadji Kamlon in 1953. Suppressed by military actions, like the Huk rebellions in the North, the rebels laid low. While there was truth to the charge of government neglect to develop Mindanao, the Muslims themselves were also victims of corruption by their native leaders who represented them in the government.

Many ethnic divisions among the Muslims continue to work against their unity. The creation of the Moro National Liberation Front which followed the Jabidah Affair in 1968³ and its increased prominence after the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 created a degree of unity. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) succeeded in holding the secessionist movement in tow by placing a tight clamp on them and forcing their leader, Nur Misuari, into exile in the Middle East. Nur Misuari, a former professor at the University of the Philippines, propagandized the movement in the Muslim world and obtained moral

and material support. The concerted effort of the AFP and the cooperation of many other Muslim political leaders continued to suppress the movement until Nur Misuari was effectively resurrected by President Corazon Aquino when she met with him to seek an end to the Muslim rebellion. Succeeding events showed that Nur Misuari desired more than what was understood by the President.

Today, however, the MNLF has again broken into three factions because of differences in objectives and personalities. Nur Misuari continues to head the largest faction operating in Western Mindanao. Hashim Salamat heads the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which is deployed in Central Mindanao. An MNLF reformist group under Dimasangkay Pundato is the smallest group and is deployed in the Lanao Provinces. The MNLF is reliant on foreign benefactors to carry out its armed struggle. In the past Libya has significantly supported the MNLF financially and materially.⁴

The Dynamics of Philippine Insurgency

Insurgency has been defined earlier as a social conflict. This is because it involves the violation of rules that govern the relations between members of society. At the outset, the government may not even be one of the protagonists in the conflict. It only becomes involved when in the process of mediating between the members of society, it cannot come up with a solution to the problem acceptable to all sides. In attempting to carry out the laws of the land, it gets entangled in the conflict and becomes a protagonist itself. The losing side, therefore, becomes aggrieved and to redress the grievance it rises in revolt against the government in order to influence it to change sides. A conflict situation like that could not have developed if the social interaction between the protagonists

is not played upon and blown out of proportion by a third party who has a higher interest than the interest of either of the original protagonists. In the case of the communist insurgency, the communists took advantage of the conflict of interests between the landholders and the tenants to complicate issues. The Muslim rebellion began when the Muslim intellectuals in the '60s found support from the Pan-Islam awakening after the World War II. The grievances against the government assumed more complicated dimensions to justify the Muslim secessionists' demand. This has been the pattern of the dynamics of the insurgency problem in the Philippines.

The two major types of insurgency run in parallel course. One started much earlier than and provided the motivation and the model for carrying out the objective of the other. Both began with objectives that were less than what they profess now. The process by which the government got mired in the conflict is an interesting case study as it can provide the proper answers to the problem.

The communist insurgency, as the most formidable between the two types, was born out of a historical incident - the colonization of the Philippines. The present day communist insurgency evolved out of the agrarian unrest that indigenously developed in the latter part of the Spanish colonization of the islands and continued during the American rule. Early historians averred that "the agrarian unrest was not a product of American control in the Philippines nor, in fact did it stem directly from the Spanish regime."⁵ They chronicled the existence of a home-grown agrarian slave-tenant system that resembled patterns found in Medieval Europe. When Magellan landed in the Philippines in 1521, he found small colonies under chiefs known as 'datus' living along the coastal areas.

They were the first settlers who came from Malaysia and Indonesia in large outrigger boats called "barangay". As settlers, they organized themselves into communities known as barangay (named after the outrigger boats), holding communal lands. The following aptly describes Philippine communities at the time the early Spaniards arrived in the islands:

Since the family grew from the family group, community and family were one and the same. The functions of the family could not be distinguished from those of the community. A man performing the functions of a father was at the same time performing those of a citizen. Each age group had specific community duties. A high degree of family solidarity and loyalty developed. In the barangay communities a good leader was a strong brave man who embodied the old traditions and preferably had benevolent ancestors and a good citizen was a loyal follower who live up to the obligations of his community and family status. The dominant value was security and to the extent that the community was secure it was good.

The Spaniards took advantage of the natural weaknesses of the scattered barangays. One by one they were subjugated by the Spanish conquistadores. At first indirect rule was practiced by maintaining the original authority structure of the datus, appointing them either as "gobernadocillo" or "cabeza de barangay." As more members of the Catholic religious orders arrived, the priests established themselves in the countryside and usurped the authority of the datus. They divided the land into large areas of jurisdiction, sometimes combining several villages together. Lands were also distributed to the officers of the Spanish soldiers to include the members of the community living on the lands to work on them. In return, the grantees assumed the responsibility to protect the people in the community and help them to learn the Christian faith. This was how the big plantations called haciendas originated. As more lands were opened, Spaniards

got first the priority for ownership. Some datus were later awarded also to appease them and to obtain their cooperation. Thus the corruption of the traditional values began. This corrupted sector of the old Filipino society later intermarried with the Spaniards to form another class, in addition to the properties ruling class, that exploited the agricultural peasants as ruthlessly as the Spaniards. From them also came some of the intellectuals who inflamed the fire of Filipino nationalism and triggered the revolts of the 19th century. The seeds of the agrarian unrest were planted, and sprouted during the American period.

The Americans were not really happy when they took over the islands. Their discomfiture was not assuaged when they spent no less than two years to end the insurrection against Spain which carried over in their regime. If the United States did prepare the Philippines for political independence better than the Europeans prepared their dependencies, the same cannot be said of US achievements in the economic field.⁷ They did little to modify the Spanish heritage of large landholdings, the high proportion of sharecropping, and the wealth and influence of the Catholic Church. Gunnar Myrdal in his three-volume research on the poverty of nations entitled Asian Drama, wrote that American policy made the situation worse in some respects.⁸ American investments in and free trade with the Philippines stimulated the colony's dependence on the export of a few agricultural products like sugar, coconuts, and abaca. This led to an increase in the number of absentee landlords who engaged in the profitable business of export of the products from their lands. Between the period 1900 and 1935, the percentage of Filipino farmers

who were tenants doubled. In summary, American economic policy strengthened the economic and political power of the wealthy and hereditary landlords whose interests were to maintain their privileged positions; a situation hardly compatible with the democratization of Filipino society. Because of their economic power, this class also gained political power which continues to the present. There are other impacts of American occupation of the islands which will be discussed in later chapters where their relevance is connected.

The secessionist insurgency being fought now by the Muslim Filipinos started in the 1970s. The communist insurgents provided in no small measure the motivation. There were, however, other factors that had built up in the past. The Muslims from Borneo could have swept the whole Philippines had the Spaniards not arrived. The Spaniards contained them in Western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, but never really conquered them. The many series of wars between the Spaniards and the Muslims called "Moro Wars" were significant in that they contributed to the tensions and conflicts that exist today between Christian and Muslim Filipinos.⁹ The Spanish desire to convert the Muslims to Christianity was so ruthlessly and forcefully carried out that present day Muslims still harbor the fear that the Christians who have settled and are settling in Mindanao intend to christianize them.

The Americans contributed, unintentionally perhaps, to the animosity between the Christian and Muslim Filipinos. By bribing the datus, no Muslim united actions were taken against the Americans. The US carried out some military operations against recalcitrant groups who did not submit themselves to American rule. To westernize the Muslims so they would be as capable of governing themselves as

the Christian Filipinos, they sent Filipino civil officials from Manila to Muslim areas to introduce new ways of government and to encourage both communities to cooperate in civic project with the objective of reducing the deep-rooted Christian-Muslim animosity.¹⁰ To strengthen the program further, they encouraged Christians to settle in Muslim lands. This action sowed more seeds of tension and conflict between the two communities as private ownership of land is opposed to the Muslim's concept of communal use of the land. Furthermore, due to ignorance of Islam, the Americans prevented visits of foreigners, especially Arab Muslims, to the Muslim South. They wanted to limit contacts only to those between the Christian and Muslim Filipinos to facilitate the pacification and the institution of government.¹¹ The Muslims saw this as subtle attempts to christianize them. The Muslims never understood the easy manner in which Christian Filipinos cooperated with the Americans and when the Americans tried to use the Christians to convince the Muslims to do the same, distrust further deepened. They viewed the Christian Filipinos as aiming to change the Muslim way of life in the same manner they perceived the Spaniards. This distrust became apparent when the Muslims did not cooperate in the nationalist movement for an independent Philippines. On the other hand, Muslim who once fought the Americans opted to be under the American protectorate rather than be subjugated by the Christian Filipinos. Some Americans favored this Muslim position either out of spite toward Filipino nationalists or because of sympathy with the Muslim cause. American economic interests wanted Mindanao and Sulu to be made into a separate political entity, independent from the rest of the country, and governed by a special commission. Contained in

a bill proposed in the United States Congress in 1926, the idea did not materialize.¹² As a result Filipino nationalists viewed this as an effort to divide the country. The Muslims viewed the rejection on their preferred option as a joint effort of the US and the Christian Filipinos to proceed with the total subjugation of the Muslim nation. The distrust and animosity continue to be the standing block in the reconciliation of the Muslims and the Christians up to the present, and one of the reasons for the Muslim rebellion in Southern Philippines.

Differences Between the Two Main Types of Insurgency

Communist and secessionist insurgencies are treated as one problem in this study because of their common characteristics and dynamics. Both use terrorist activities to achieve their objectives. For this reason, in intelligence reports by the AFP they are referred to as Communist terrorists (CTs) and muslim terrorists (MTs). They differ, however, in their goals. The CTs aim to topple the present government and replace it with a Marxist-Leninist government. The MTs want to have the whole Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and Palawan (MINSUPALA) consisting of 13 provinces, to become one independent nation separate and distinct from the Philippines. This difference sometimes reassures the government of the impossibility of cooperation between the two insurgent groups. The AFP, however, is wary of an MNLF-NPA tie-up. The military fears that because of a common enemy, the two will put aside their ideological differences and forge a temporary alliance to fight the government.¹³ The communists may use this route in their move for political control of the entire country. Fighting a force of less than 20,000 Muslims later on may be easier than fighting alone the AFP consisting of more than 200,000 men with the whole government

machinery behind it. The NPA, just like any communist organization, will follow Mao's "one step-backward, two-steps-forward strategy". Additionally, Nur Misuari was known to be a leftist radical when he was a student and later a professor at the University of the Philippines. It would not be far-fetched for him to be convinced to sell the muslim cause.¹⁴

In fighting style, while both use the hit-and-run tactics, the Muslims are more camp-bound and less mobile. By nature, families of Muslim rebels follow the band of their husbands. In the past, this practice caused difficulties for the government forces as they found it difficult to avoid inflicting casualties on civilian stragglers among the armed Muslim bands.

Another difference is the degree of political organization. The communist insurgents are more politically organized than the Muslims. This is understandable inasmuch as they have had more years of experience receive and not only military training from sponsor nations, but political indoctrination as well. They have already had two generations of leaders. The pre-World War II and post-World War II leaders have now been replaced by a younger and more highly educated leadership that is adept in the state-of-the-art methods of the insurgency conflict. They learned much from their experience in the Huk era when they overestimated their strength and abilities to rally the population of Central Luzon to their cause because of the absence of a political front to provide them the intelligence and a careful estimate of the situation. They have now become highly reliant on the support of established political democratic fronts which not only give direction to their activities, but also provide them the needed logistical

support and other venues of subversion.

The Muslims are less politically organized. The MNLF is supposed to be the political front organization, but it busies itself more with military undertakings. The leadership is oriented on personalities and ethnic groups. The movement is divided into three factions and no one leader is recognized as the political head. This makes coordination with sponsor nations difficult to attain. Nur Misuari's self-exile during the Marcos regime enabled him to gain contact with leaders in the Muslim World. For this, he may be presumed to have an edge over the other two leaders. But Hashim Salamat, a graduate of the Al Hazar' University in Cairo, Egypt, has some international contacts, too. This division is not healthy for the Muslim cause as the International Conference of Muslim Ministers organization finds difficulty in communicating with the Filipino Muslims because of the lack of a unified organization.

CHAPTER III

FACTORS THAT FAVOR THE GROWTH OF INSURGENCY

Lest agrarian unrest be blamed totally for all the conditions that facilitated the growth of insurgency, this chapter shall discuss other internal and external factors that play a part. The internal factors are those deriving from the physical attributes of a nation such as geography and its people, and the different attributes of national character reflected in social, political, and economic systems. The external factors are those that affect and impact on the internal systems over which the Philippines has no control.

Location and Geography¹

The Philippines lies within the tropics and extends about 1,770 kilometers north to south along the southeastern rim of Asia. It forms a land chain between the Pacific Ocean on the east and the South China Sea on the west, and between the China mainland on the north and Malaysia and Indonesia on the south.

As a archipelago, it consists of some 7,100 islands and islets, only 154 of which have areas exceeding 14 square kilometers. Ninety five per cent of the population lives on eleven of the islands. There are three major regional groupings of the islands. The largest island is Luzon, about the size of Kentucky. The second largest is Mindanao, about the size of Indiana. Between these two major islands lies the third regional grouping of smaller islands called the Visayas. The islands are characterized by irregular coastlines, marked by bays, straits, and inland seas, and stretched for more than 16,000 kilometers, a distance twice as long as the coastline of the coterminous United States. Most of the large islands are mountainous with the uplands

making up 65% of the land area. Most have narrow coastal lowlands, except for Luzon, Negros, Panay, and Mindanao, which have extensive lowland areas. The mountains and forest close by these lowlands provide a location where insurgents often operate and establish mass bases and a refuge where they can disappear when government forces clamp down on them. These lowland areas are where the agrarian unrest started and continues to take the lead today. The long coastlines make the country vulnerable to smuggling, not only of untaxed merchandise but also of arms for the insurgents from sponsor nations. The strategic location of the Philippines has made the United States place importance on military bases in the Philippines to pursue their power projection in the Pacific.

The Filipinos and their Social Life

In 1985 there were 54.8 million Filipinos. With an average growth of 2.4% per year, they should be close to 58 million in 1988. The Filipinos are 95% Christians (83% Catholics, 9% Protestants, and 3% of other religious denominations) and 5% Muslims. English is the language of business and commerce and is used also as the medium of education, although Filipino (Tagalog) is a required subject in all schools. There are many ethnic groupings, even among the Malay stock which predominate. There are some 87 languages and dialects being spoken by the different ethnic groupings.

The Filipinos make up an extremely complex society that defies easy generalization. It is shaped by a rich variety of cultures. Filipino attitudes and values are derived from several diverse institutions.² First is the tightly-knit, hierarchical barangay with its emphasis on security and survival. Second is the Catholic Church,

with its universalist civilization and its support for the privileges of the descendants of the Spaniards who still control much of the wealth of the nation. Third, Filipinos derived much from the energetic, pragmatic administrative and political structures of the American type of government. Inspite of this rich variety of cultures social scientists claimed that Filipinos have achieved a degree of national unity and a commitment to democracy that makes them different from other developing nations. They claim, however, that the closely-knit hierarchical barangay based on familial kinship predisposes them to give greater weight to primary groups and personal relationships than to the contractual and abstract values of nationhood. Their Catholic upbringing instituted respect and submissiveness to the sector controlling their means of livelihood, causing them to be vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. They have been exploited by religious friars in the past, the landed gentries during the Spanish regime, and continue to be exploited by the newly emerged commercial and industrial groups that have taken over from the traditional elite during contemporary times.

The Philippines has remained predominantly rural. The process of urbanization has accelerated in the last decade, especially in Luzon. The improvements in communication, by way of radio and television, have increased the awareness of the rural population. They have become more informed on the affairs of government and a better life in which they could not share because their economic status has not improved as fast as that of most Filipinos who live in the urban areas. The young rural folks have begun to trek to the cities in search of jobs that they soon discover are not available. They contribute to the multitude of unemployed in the cities. Some of them join the

colonies of squatters who put up make-shift abodes on private and government lands, normally near probable places of employment. Their sad state provides the background for the issues raised against the government by cause-oriented groups in the past and at present. The radical left and the communists make use of and draw much support and sympathy from these squatters. Their homes and residences become safehouses for the urban terrorists and liquidator units of both the communist and the secessionist insurgents. Communist infiltrators have reportedly intentionally joined these colonies of urban squatters to act as agitators and propagandists. For lack of jobs, most of them have become for-hire demonstrators. No one can fail to observe their presence during big rallies and demonstrations.

Philippine Economy³

The Philippines is still an agricultural country. Citizens of the US and other nations cannot understand how a country so rich in agricultural resources and bestowed with a climate suitable for food production can not be self sufficient in food production and has had resorted to importation rice, its staple food on several occasions. There are several explanations for this sad reality. First is the low productivity of the land. Initially fertilizers were not widely used. When the use was started, the cost of fertilizers became exorbitantly high and the increased output did not offset the cost of the fertilizer. This was especially true for small farmers. Another explanation is the concentration on crops for export, a factor that tended to increase the number of tenants and further complicated the agrarian problem. Although the Philippines has reached some degree of self sufficiency in rice production through

the adoption of improved technology, it still suffers periodically from the effects of floods due to typhoons. Finally, hoarding is perpetuated by the Chinese merchants, whose money-lending practices to small farmers create false picture of shortages.

The traditional Philippine economy correlates with traditional Filipino society, both of which were a creation of the hacienda economy started by the Spaniards during their rule. The two-class society made up of a few wealthy landowners and masses of dependent workers was passed on to the United States. Unfortunately, because of concentration of efforts on education and the institution of a government system, the United States failed to correct the economic institution. Instead, a colonial economy developed tying the Philippines to the United States' market by free trade policies concentrated on the production of a few agricultural products.⁴ This arrangement did little to ameliorate the living conditions of the masses in the rural areas because the bulk of the income goes to the government, the rich, and the urban centers. Additionally, it has made the Philippines highly dependent on the traditional crops for export, and the number of tenant farmers for such crops increased. When the world's demand for these commodities is reduced, the tenant workers are displaced. A good example of this is the lot of the sugarland workers in Negros Island. During periods of demand for sugar the workers did not see the disparity in the distribution of income from the proceeds of their labor because to them it was more than sufficient. Now that they have lost their source of livelihood because of closure of the sugar plantations and the sugar mills, they realize how they previously had been taken advantage of. Even when allotted lands by the owners to

grow food for themselves, they find themselves inexperienced. Progressive foundations and cooperatives created by farmers have failed to alleviate the sugar planters' miserable conditions. Although some progress has been made much more needs to be done.

The government has initiated efforts to stimulate ventures in new and profitable investment opportunities in other forms of agriculture.⁵ Some of them can be exploited relatively quickly, like growing of vegetables and flowers and exporting them as Taiwan has done. Others would need conversions and preparation to other crops, and would need a longer period of gestation. They would need greater government help by way of technical assistance and modern institutions to prop up small-holders of land. Similar efforts have been tried before. However, graft and corruption, inefficiency and ineptness of government machinery tasked to carry them out and lack of viable plan to sustain them, caused those efforts to fail. The program of the current government on new economic projects to uplift the masses of the tenants and small landowners will attract foreign investments if the government can assure the investors of their security from monopolists and a stable investment climate.⁶

There were also past government policies intended to correct the agricultural problem of inequities in the land distribution.⁷ Land reform as an agricultural policy has failed to address the many social ramifications such as the Filipino's tie to his land and the basic economic problems of increasing population, inaccessible technology for productivity and lack of capital. There are a number of proposals which have been discussed, adopted, and carried out. Most of them faced insurmountable obstacles which doomed them right from the beginning. Others failed to consider the potential social effects and

other societal considerations.

First among these proposals is land redistribution.⁸ It calls for the government to purchase large tracts of land and divide them among the tenants who worked them. This was started in the "social justice program" of President Manuel Quezon in the late 1930s, and expanded under the Magsaysay administration. An expensive option, it faced the difficulties of assessing the price of an estate, and the even greater problem of financing the purchase. Landlords wanted immediate cash and tenants can pay only small sums over a very long period. Another problem is how to distribute the land because small lots are uneconomic, yet larger lots would force out some tenants. The population increased has also played an impact on the redistribution problem. All these problems resulted in little success and created subsequent problems. Because small lots are inefficient, the farmer recipients could not earn enough to pay for the land, thereby forcing them to default in their payments. When they resorted to borrowing they became victims of usurious lenders from among the original landlords or the Chinese merchants. Ultimately they lost the land.

Resettlement was the second solution.⁹ The Philippines has large areas of fertile unused lands in Mindanao in the south, and the Cagayan Valley in the North. The government opened up resettlement colonies in Mindanao during Quezon's time and the colonies increased in magnitude during Magsaysay's presidency. Under Magsaysay, the program formed part of the solution to the Huk problem in Central Luzon. The program was successful in some measure because the government provided the settlers with capital, seed, better technology, health and education services, and tools in addition to the free transportation

for the farmers and their families. Such resettlement was very expensive and consumed much government financial resources. Failure to sustain support for the program placed the settlers at the mercy again of the traditional loan sources who extracted usurious interests. There was another more significant impact of the resettlement. It revived the animosity between the Muslims and the Christians because of differences in the concept of property ownership.

The Muslims look on land ownership through the prism of the Koran, the Sunnah, and other Muslim customary laws. The Torrens system of land ownership, imported from Australia, is effective in Christian areas. It is however, in irreconcilable conflict with Muslim land tenure traditions.¹⁰

Another solution that was tried was to raise productivity.¹¹ This was begun during the Magsaysay time and succeeding administrations adopted it because it was less drastic in nature. However, it was difficult to carry out. Government agencies undertook agricultural extensions services, and other public and private projects were carried out to increase productivity. These faced social and technical obstacles that had to be overcome and there was a limit to the increase in production from the small farm plots. Support and sustenance services like marketing , credit, irrigation, etc., can be created through cooperative effort with minimal or with no government support. But obstacles and resistance were encountered. The result was more failure than success stories and the spirit of the cooperative movement faltered. The primary cause of the failure was a lack of managerial abilities of the farmers and other agricultural workers to operate a cooperative. Related to this lack of managerial expertise, the local acknowledged leader of the community is normally the wealthy member whose primary interests were to maintain their

position of stature and wealth. Rural banks managed agricultural extension credits given by the Central Bank of the Philippines to an established pre-cooperative organization called "samahang nayon". These banks were normally owned by the richest members of the community with proper connection with the National Government. Because of lack of education and natural respect for the family, a member of these same rich families was chosen to head the samahang nayon. There were cases where income derived from the cooperative ventures that was supposed to be remitted to the Central Bank by the rural bank was withheld by the latter until Central Bank declared the cooperative in default. During investigations, the head of the cooperative hid the farmer signatories to the loans. When the loans were erased as bad debts by the Central Bank, the rural banks retained the original income contributions from the farmers and at the same time expropriated the property used as collateral. In the end, the family owning the rural bank got the proceeds from the farmers' labor and got his land, too. The national government lost the value of the loan. Many cases like this occurred during the Marcos administration and either were not investigated or even if investigated were quashed because influential members of the bureaucracy were involved.

Still another alternative to improve the agricultural economy was one sponsored by the entrepreneurs and economic management groups. They proposed to relieve the pressure on the land by the government opening up urban employment opportunities. These newly emerged members of Filipino society would rather shift government resources to production of goods and services. According to this group, "when jobs are available in the city, the people will leave the land."¹² However,

there was no need for this motivation. The working conditions in the countryside have already been intolerable for centuries. Their resultant migration to the urban centers have created new social problems: overpopulation, the mushrooming squatter colonies, increased urban crimes, higher unemployment, labor unrest and strikes, and demonstrations.

Almost all past administrations have used elements of the economic policies described above. Combinations of them at times brought some degree of success and raised the living of the rural population to a tolerable level. The efforts failed to institutionalize the changes because there was no change in the social structure. The policies tried to give opportunities for the poor to rise to within distance of the few who had much more in life. But the mechanisms are still controlled by those who have always been protective of their status. The basic cause has not been removed.

Political Factors

The two preceding sets of factors conditioned the political system of the Philippines. The Philippines, like other developing countries, adopted government institutions modelled after those of Western nations. In particular, the United States' achievements in the political development of the Philippines are incomparable with the rest of the colonial powers in the 19th century. There was, however, a difference in the process by which government institutions developed. The difference lies in the social and economic situations as well as the speed by which the institutions of government were introduced. In the United States as well as in other western democracies, the slow process of the development of the contractual

relationship between the government and the people enabled the modifications of their attitudes and social behavior to keep abreast of the demands made on the political system. In the former, structures were established well ahead with provision for the development of a popular base relevant to them.¹³ In the Philippines, this process has been speeded up and disjointed. As in other developing countries, this kind of situation has caused imbalances in the modernization process and the traditional behavior is only partially adapted to the new structures. The imbalances have placed many pressures on the resultant political system. Most articulate was a section of society which originally came from the wealthy families based on land ownership or taken over by professional politicians.

While national affairs have always been the domain of the traditional elite of Philippine society, after the Second World War a phenomenon started in the political scene, especially in the remote local areas. This phenomenon involved "the displacement of men of prominence and prosperity from local leadership positions by upwardly mobile men from small farming, fishing, and business families and other humble backgrounds."¹⁴ This came about because of the impact of national politics in local communities and the political competition involving a growing mass participation. These two forces led to the adoption of more professional criteria for recruitment to the positions of town political leadership. This phenomenon, however, has not been observed to have occurred uniformly throughout the country. It has occurred more in towns and provinces where the level of social mobilization was high and concentration of landownership was low.¹⁵ The level of social mobilization was high in towns and provinces around

principal cities like Manila, where access to education is easier than in other areas. The fast urbanization process taking place in the Philippines will tend to promote the changes initiated by this phenomenon, but will also bring about the debilitating political corruption that is a consequence of the patron-client relationship.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHILIPPINES UNDER MARCOS

No other President has had as much impact on the Philippines as President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Elected as president in 1965 he remained as the president until he was deposed in February 26, 1986 by the much heralded "People's Revolution". He extended his constitutionally allowed two terms of office by declaring martial law in 1972. While the country was under martial law he allegedly rigged a constitutional convention that was called to draft a new constitution to change the form of government which would allow him to continue to remain in office far beyond the two terms.

Basis of the Declaration of Martial Law

The fundamental reasons for the declaration of martial law on September 22, 1972, were embodied in Proclamation 1081, the written instrument by which President Marcos instituted the era of martial rule in the Philippines. He primarily cited the "lawless men" and "ruthless group of men" who are

waging an armed insurrection and rebellion against the Republic of the Philippines in order to forceably seize political and state power in this country, overthrow the duly constituted government and supplant our existing political, social, economic and legal order with an entirely new one whose form of government, whose system of law, whose conceptions of God and religion, whose notion of individual rights and common relations, and its political, social, and economic, legal and moral precepts are based on Marxist-Leninist-Maoist teachings and beliefs.

All except one other introductory paragraph described the heinous threat and danger posed by the communists. This paragraph addressed the "equally serious disorder in Mindanao and Sulu resulting from the unsettled conflict between certain elements of the Christian and Muslim population".²

The basis of the threat for the declaration of martial law was the most controversial, as the events that were transpiring in the Philippines were alleged to have been stage-managed by President Marcos and his close allies in the government. The allegations were based on the fact that the President was in the last years of his term of office allowed by law, and he still wanted to continue to rule. Whoever was responsible for the events occurring in the Philippines during the few months and days before the declaration of martial law had created a situation so bad the attitude of the US Embassy in Manila was described by Francis T. Underhill, a political officer from 1969-1971 as follows:

This place is a hopeless mess. Power is so dispersed that nothing can be done. Graft and corruption are rife. The streets are unsafe. The Philippines needs a strong man, a man on horseback to get the country organized and going again. Look at the progress being made by Park in Korea, Suharto in Indonesia, and Lee in Singapore.³

An incident in July 1972 involving a cache of arms in northern Luzon generated a lot of talk about the incipient communist insurgency, but it was rejected by the opposition and critics of the administration. Even the CIA doubted that the cache of arms came from the foreign supporters of the communist rebels. They were proven wrong a decade later by the admittance of two leaders of the Communist Party that the arms were really intended for their revolution. They revealed that the arms came from North Korea.⁴

The opposition to the Marcos regime claimed that the series of bombing incidents days before the declaration of martial law was staged in order to justify to the United States the plan to declare martial law. Accordingly, Ambassador Byroade transmitted a message to Presi-

dent Marcos that the U.S. Government would have no objection if martial law were needed to put down the communist insurgency.⁵ The US, therefore, provided a reenforcement for the decision made in September 1972. Some sectors in the present government continuously made this charge against him, and the communists propagandized this as US interference.

Economic Crisis Caused by Martial Rule

The Marcos Administration, especially beginning in 1972, ushered in the period of crony capitalism.⁶ Crony capitalism refers to the economy created by favored businessmen who obtained undue advantage in domestic business. While past administrations had also granted favors to a number of existing business conglomerates, during the authoritarian rule of Marcos favors were granted to special friends with no known business establishment.

One cause of the economic crisis was the massive government spending that characterized the first two terms of Marcos presidency. Due to a vast infrastructure investment program, especially in Mindanao, "the government widened the gap between investment and savings from an excess supply savings in 1961-1965 to an excess of investment over savings at the rate of P294 million yearly during the 1966-1974".⁷ The "savings deficiency was inevitably reflected in the current accounts deficits in the balance of payments, the balance of which increased almost tenfold".⁸ However, some aspects of infrastructure program proved to be effective. Road networks were expanded in Mindanao. Rice self-sufficiency was reached through the construction of irrigation systems all over the islands. But continuous heavy spending beyond 1970 only paid dividends as far as the investment made in

the energy self-reliance program which reduced dependence on imported oil from 81% in 1974 to 58% in 1984.⁹ Other capital expenditures financed by foreign borrowings were dubious in utility because of poor planning and outright mismanagement by favored businessmen of the Marcos government.

There were certain achievements of the economic policies of the government under Marcos during the first five years of martial law. The leaders of the initial martial law years trimmed government deficits to lower levels, primarily through better tax collections. Capital expenditures were limited to outlays for infrastructure projects and not on "other capital outlays" which included construction by ministries not directly related to public works. The reduction of dependence on imported oil through the energy self-reliance program was another achievement which cushioned the 1973 first oil shock. People in and out of the government welcomed the strong government, particularly as they saw the destabilising effects of the quadrupling of oil prices in the world market. The economic policies carried out during that period helped to limit the inflation rate to a single-digit level by 1975.¹⁰

After 1975, however, unsound economic policies began to characterize the Marcos government. Political interference in the working of the economy during the 70s and early 80s became noticeable. Where before the period, priority was given to infrastructure projects, there was shift to the "other capital outlays". Major construction projects whose value to the economy was questionable began in 1976 coinciding with the IMF meeting in Manila. These included the Manila Bay Reclamation Project, the Cultural Center Complex, five-star hotels

financed by government banks, the University of Life facilities, and three highly sophisticated medical centers. The Kidney Foundation of the Philippines was a medical center for the treatment of the suspected sickness of the President. All these were the brain children of the First Lady, Imelda Marcos, and they caused her to be tagged as suffering from an "edifice complex".¹¹ The situation became much worse in the early 80s when corporate equity investment became the most important capital outlay, surpassing infrastructure investments. This trend was attributable to the bail-out operation of large private firms, mostly owned by Marcos' cronies, which had to be rescued from financial collapse. Government banks like the Central Bank, the Philippine National Bank, the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Land Bank, and the National Development Company were made to extend loans and charged with the management of the distressed firms.¹²

Another policy that contributed to the economic crisis was the creation of government mandated monopolies in key agricultural sectors like sugar, tobacco, coconut, and grains. There would not have been a problem with the single trading agency in the sugar industry, for example, if it had been managed by all participants in the sugar industry who are represented on the Board. The single trading agency, however, was controlled by the cronies of the government who gave incomplete or false information about their operations to the planters, millers, and other industrial participants. The effect on millions of farmers and their dependents resulted in great dissatisfaction with the government.

Socio-Political Development

Political development during the Marcos administration followed

the same pattern as the economic events, both of which were brought about by the shifting economic policies. While hopeful scepticism greeted the period in 1973, despair and frustration bordering on anger characterized the years after 1983. With the imposition of martial law in September and the completion of the constitutional revision in late 1972, indications of change in the political structure and procedures associated with Philippine democracy in the past became apparent. The barangay became the new base of the Philippine-style democracy, and new channels of communication between the government and the people were defined.

Later developments in the socio-political arena indicated the Marcos family intended to institutionalize their regime. At the barangay level Marcos bureaucrats provided the leadership and linkages to the national government. The military and police forces became the privileged organizations tasked to protect and preserve the first family in the National Capital Region. In successive national and local elections which were held, Marcos' men and relatives were supported and made to win. His son Bongbong Marcos became the governor of their home province, Ilocos Norte, at the age of 21. On the question of succession, a committee was created to be headed by the Prime Minister which would provide the transition until a new president could be elected. His wife, Imelda Marcos, was made a member, thereby confirming the suspicion that the First Lady was being prepositioned to take over.

Opposition however began to build up in the late 1970s and strengthened after the assassination of Benigno Aquino in August 1983. Disenchantment with the regime began as early as the middle of

the 1970s. Political activism gained adherence even among the middle and upper classes as they began to sympathize with the students who resumed demonstrations in 1977 after a period of relative quiet.

Some sectors of the Catholic Church joined in the fray. The excesses of the regime forced the more radical members of the religious sectors towards a politically active stance. A small number of priests and nuns joined the New People's Army as active combatants. Others supported it through the Christians for National Liberation, a member of the communist-led National Democratic Front.¹³ Even Protestant ministers in a display of ecumenical cooperation actively criticized and opposed Marcos.

The Marcos regime propelled the Church, against its wishes and traditions, into an active changing political role with Cardinal Jaime Sin as its leader and spokesman. The Church was almost alone in criticizing the President and his associates for the excesses of their rule for quite sometime. It became later on the moving force that emboldened the silent opposition to come out and consolidated all the forces that finally toppled Marcos.

The Politicization of the AFP

There used to be a time when the Philippine military played a non-political role and was "accustomed to nonpartisan subordinate of successive civilian governments under the alternate control of one political party and one elected president or another".¹⁴ This is not to be taken, however, that the military were totally isolated from politics. Retired and older military officers still could recall with bitterness how they had to curry favors with the Congressional members of the Commission on Appointments in their hope for advancement to the

rank of Colonel and above. The officers of the Philippine Constabulary, a national police force and a major service of the AFP, found they had to establish close relationships with town mayors, provincial governors, and their province's congressmen. All past presidents of the Philippines, even before Marcos, gave key positions, especially the post of Chief of Staff, to officers whom they trusted. That meant they were usually officers from their home region or province. Largely, however, before martial law the military was a nonpolitical servant of the nation and remained largely beholden to the president or a political party. They looked down on officers and other peers who allowed themselves to become involved in politics. They dreaded the thought of having their military file stamped with the word "politicking", as it could portend a difficult path to advancement.

The role of the military greatly changed under President Marcos.. Two tendencies were immediately observed by his critics during his first two terms in office: undue promotion preference was given to officers coming from his home region of Ilocos and he was generous with the Armed Forces. His decision to declare martial law was supported and implemented by all of his senior officers. Only General Rafael Ileto opposed the move, and he was exiled to a diplomatic post abroad. After President Marcos was deposed, Ileto was recalled from retirement and became the Assistant Secretary of National Defense under the Aguino Government. He subsequently became the Secretary of National Defense after President Aquino fired Secretary Enrile when the latter became critical of the government. General Ileto recently resigned as Secretary of National Defense and was replaced by General Fidel Ramos, the former Chief of Staff.

During the martial law period, the military was alleged to have become "an active, privileged and essential bulwark of the Marcos Government".¹⁵ With the increase in size from 54,000 to three times that number, came rapid promotions, a series of pay increases, and generous opportunities for outside and post-retirement incomes.¹⁶ Military men began to take civilian functions. In the provinces, military commanders replaced mayors and governors as the principal holders of powers. In some instances this became necessary because the governors and mayors in insurgent-ridden areas were absentee office holders or they simply deserted their posts out of fear of the insurgents. Some retired military officers, especially general officers, were appointed governors in their home provinces to head the President's party, the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL).

The Marcos era also developed elitism in the military. Not only were the security and intelligence units based in and around Manila "Ilocanized" (infused with Ilocanos who are from the President's region), but these units were the recipients of special favors, including promotions of their officers, grants of more financial support, and better equipment. Examples included the Presidential Security Command, the Presidential Guard Battalion, the Metropolitan Command of the Philippine Constabulary (METROCOM), the National Intelligence and Security Authority (NISA), the Manila Unit of the Integrated National Police, the 2nd Infantry Division in Camp Capinpin, Tanay, and the 5th Infantry Brigade in Camp Aquino, Tarlac. This concentration of highly privileged forces in and near the capital region were intended to secure the President and his family, as well as other members of the regime. General Fabian C. Ver created these units and insured that

they remained loyal to him by dispensing material and financial rewards. However, these forces failed to save the President during the February 1986 People's Revolution. From these units also came the core of the Marcos' Loyalists who remained a threat to the security of the present government.

In addition to the size and structure of the AFP, the Marcos regime brought about changes in the values and behavior in some sectors in the military. Starting with the security and intelligences offices and units, many young and promising officers became attracted to lucrative assignments in the logistic and financial fields where they observed their classmates and contemporaries not only getting faster promotions, but partaking of other privileges and benefits accruing from the graft and corruption perpetuated by ranking military officers. Additionally, they sought assignments near and around the national capital. Many of these officers were those who had assignments outside of Manila fighting the insurgents for some years. As a way of escape from assignments in units combatting the communist insurgents or the muslim rebels, they curried connections with those in the in-group of General Ver. This resulted in the undesirable consequence of leaving the combatant forces with the less capable officers. Forced to live off the land due to failures of higher headquarters to provide them even with most basic resources to sustain combat operations, they became unpopular among the civilians and vulnerable to the NPA's attacks due to inadequacies of equipment. In 1981 and 1982, officers from the units who had been fighting on the insurgency fronts formed the "Reform the AFP Movement" (RAM), also called "We Belong" which aimed to restore professionalism within, and public respect for, the armed forces by bringing nonprofessional behavior of their colleagues and

higher ranking officers to the attention of the President. Born in period when the president's health started to deteriorate, the RAM was isolated by the sector of the military loyal to General Ver, the then Chief of Staff. Furthermore, it was infiltrated by officers belonging to another camp wielding political power in the government, the Ministry of National Defense under Minister Juan Ponce Enrile. Enrile was at this time the competition to the suspected Imelda/Ver power duo. He controlled a majority of the original RAM officers and they played a significant role in the downfall of the Marcos regime. Unfortunately, however, having become politicians themselves, this group later became rebels against the present administration which they once joined and helped to establish.

In sum, the deterioration of the AFP under Marcos was due to the schizophrenia it suffered from two very conflicting missions: one, to support and defend the Marcos government and two, to protect the nation against external and domestic armed threats. The first mission was reflected in the characteristics and level of elite organizations concentrated around Manila which provided the most attractive career opportunities for the rank and file. The task of defending the nation was carried out by AFP units outside of Manila area. In contrast to those that protect the First Family, the life of those who served the units fighting the insurgents was unpleasant and their rewards were very meager. They were inadequately supplied and equipped because equipment due them was sold off to enrich officers at the support organizations in the urban areas.

The military environment under the Marcos regime facilitated the corruption of the military and caused the division which has become

apparent after its fall. As the AFP now intensifies its operations against the insurgents, it also watches its ranks for those who are still loyal to the previous regime. A third faction, consisting of the die-hard members of RAM, lurks on the side waiting to repeat what they failed to complete on 28 August 1987.

CHAPTER V

THE NATIONAL SECURITY SITUATION

The overall situation in the Philippines is characterized by a general atmosphere of uncertainty. Although President Aquino still enjoys popular support, her government is beset by a multitude of fundamental problems which are carryovers from the past administration. Additionally there are a number of social, political, economic, and military issues that have emerged out of the basic problems inherited from the past. These issues will be described and analyzed in this chapter together with the most current situations of the primary protagonists in the conflict - the government and the military on one hand versus the insurgents on the other.

The Social, Economic, and Political Climate

Social Climate. As described earlier, Philippine society is basically rural. Despite migration to the urban centers by rural people, 70% of the population remains in the countryside. They continue to live in basically the same conditions as before with only limited improvements such as roads, irrigations, bridges, and electric power due to a trickle of development projects that filtered to some areas, especially during the Marcos regime. They continue to typify the hardened and unaffected rural folk whose basic needs are still simple, and whose only dreams are to insure that their children receive a better education and obtain better opportunities in life. Most of them are still tenants, although a number were lucky enough to get Certificates of Land Transfer, the instrument used in the Land Reform Code decreed by President Marcos in 1972 to divide and distribute large ricelands to the tenants. Those who obtained parcel of lands in

productive areas are getting by in paying off the land transferred to them. Others encountered difficulties either because of the poor condition of the land or the absence of farm support facilities like irrigation and electricity. Some farmers in this group have opted to return their land and work as tenants in other regions.

In the urban areas life is no better, as the economic slumps affect them much more. Inasmuch as they are nearer and have much more access to communication facilities they are more aware of the happenings in the world. This makes the urban population the prime determinant of the political mood of the country. It maybe recalled that the overthrow of President Marcos was led and effected by the so called "people's revolution" in the Greater Manila Area with some support from the other urban areas such as Baguio, Cebu, Bacolod, and Davao.

Altogether the social situation, measured by the same standard, is no better than before. The Bishops-Businessmen Conference estimated in 1985 that "74% of the Filipinos considered themselves 'poor'".¹ Poverty however is relative. If compared to the wealthy five per cent of the population including foreigners doing business in the Philippines, local businessmen, and the members of the Catholic Church, a great majority of the people are indeed poor. In most rural areas of the Philippines, however, the people continue to value hard work, eat better food and live under healthier conditions with simple amenities of life. But as it is, the ones most critical of the social and economic situation in the country are the ones that perpetuate the great disparity in wealth distribution - the prime cause of the insurgency problem.

Political Climate. When President Aquino took over the helm of government, she faced two difficult political realities.² First, the extraordinary long rule of Marcos practically made the Philippine bureaucracy beholden to him. Secondly, the nation was emotionally split between those who stood by Marcos and those who supported her during the presidential election that preceded the February 1986 People's Revolution.³ The present political climate has been shaped by the actions taken by her government to deal with these problems. The attempts to break the grip of the Marcos loyalists' bureaucracy, especially the immediate replacement of the elected governors and mayors before the expiration of their tenure, began the division of the nation. There were also isolated cases of indiscriminate termination in the lower civil service positions and subsequent replacements. Political observers viewed this action as a repetition of the age-old practice of "To the victors belong the spoils of war".

There has emerged a perception that the Aquino government is mishandling the communist insurgency problem because the government is infiltrated by communists.⁴ This perception was challenged by Pro-Marcos factions of the military who attempted a number of coup d'etat in 1986 and 1987. The followers of deposed Secretary of National Defense, Juan Ponce Enrile, were one group that criticized the government on this basis and used it as an excuse for their violent attempt to take over the government on August 28, 1987. The perception was reinforced when the President released all political prisoners over the military's objections in fulfillment of her campaign promise and to open avenues for a peaceful solution to the insurgency problem. The perception was further reinforced when the government agreed to

a 60-day ceasefire with the CPP/NPA that began in December 1987. The military cooperated with the national government initiative, but the National Democratic Front exploited the period for propaganda and reorganization. The NPA in many areas blatantly violated the ceasefire agreement and staged shows of force, brandishing their weapons and strength in populated areas. Nothing was attained for the government, but the event proved to the President the apparent hopelessness of dealing with the communists. The peace initiative with the MNLF followed the same course. The Muslim rebels, under the resurrected leadership of Nur Misuari, used the period to appear in force in many municipalities in Western Mindanao in an agit-prop technique to rally the Muslim population. Up to the present time, the Muslims under him still demand the independence of the 13 provinces in MINSUPALA where the Muslims are a minority.

The Philippine government has completed its reorganization of the three branches of government with the election and convening of the members of the two houses of Congress in July 1987. The local provincial and municipal officials were likewise elected in January of 1988. A real democratically elected government is now running the affairs of the Philippines. President Aquino has progressed from the simple housewife she was before to a dedicated and sincere head-of-state who seeks to govern by consensus. She has now unsheathed "the sword of war" against the communist insurgents, although she still leaves the door open for insurgents who desire to return to the folds of the law. She has the full backing of the majority of the Senators and Congressmen whose success in the polls were accredited to her popularity. The composition of the two houses is a mix of old and

young politicians. Most of the new ones still come from old-line families that have run Philippine politics for many years. Their average political orientation is centrist, despite the perception by pro-Marcos factions and the military that a number of them are either communists or left-leaning. Some of them had even been detained by the military in the past. This in some ways created feelings of distrust, especially those who were supported by the CPP/NPA in their elections to office. As President, Cory Aquino has to mediate the differences between the political leadership in Congress and the members of her cabinet on one hand, and the military on the other. She needs the support of both if she has to succeed.

Economic Climate. The Philippine economy still reels from the mishandling of foreign debts by the Marcos administration. With a foreign debt of \$28 billion to be paid, the government is heavily burdened by the principal and interest payment. It continues to labor, as reflected by the positive, though less than desired, growth of the GNP. This is an achievement considering the negative growth that began in 1983, triggered by the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino. The flight of Filipino capital which was massive before has observably been reduced. The investment climate has considerably improved so that European business consortiums have expressed interests in investing in the country.

The government continues to stress the importance of the business sector. Just like Marcos, President Aquino calls on business leaders to have a "positive attitude". Despite adverse situations that continue to plague the nation, like increased fuel prices, more labor strikes and radical demonstrations, the government still maintains a positive outlook as far as economic development is concerned. It

is trying to balance development in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Realizing the need for more export products to balance trade deficits and to earn more foreign currencies, the government continues to search for more non-traditional export products.

The Threats to National Security

This research is focused on the insurgency threat; the foremost and most formidable threat that endangers the security of the Philippines. Because the overall threat includes not only the two types of insurgency described earlier, the AFP likewise continues to monitor the activities of the ultra-rightist groups, consisting of the Marcos loyalists and the RAM faction of the military. They are significant in the sense that they can cause some degree of instability and provide the main threats more opportunities to stage their operations.

The CPP/NPA. The strength of the CPP/NPA is estimated at 23,260 regulars with 12,200 firearms deployed in 61 guerrilla fronts throughout the country. The Communist terrorists (CTs) are active in 20% of the 42,000 barangays nationwide. The media reports that the strength has reached 26,000, agrees with military's report that they are active in 20% of the countryside, but adds that they are in full control of the 20% of the countryside.⁵ Of the 58 million Filipinos, approximately 2 million give them support through cash, food, and sanctuary either out of sympathy or because of fear due to coercion and terror.⁶

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is at the helm of the communist movement in the Philippines. Pursuing objectives of World Communism, it tends to follow more the Chinese-Maoist line. It relies on popular fronts to stage and drum up its activities because it cannot legally exist. The largest of these fronts is the National

Democratic Front which has come to be the umbrella for all the popular fronts comprised of labor, students, farmers, and professional organizations. The NPA is the armed component of the movement. It is organized into provincial districts whose operations and activities are orchestrated by regional committees. The insurgent organization in a province is portrayed and described by the military in the following manner:

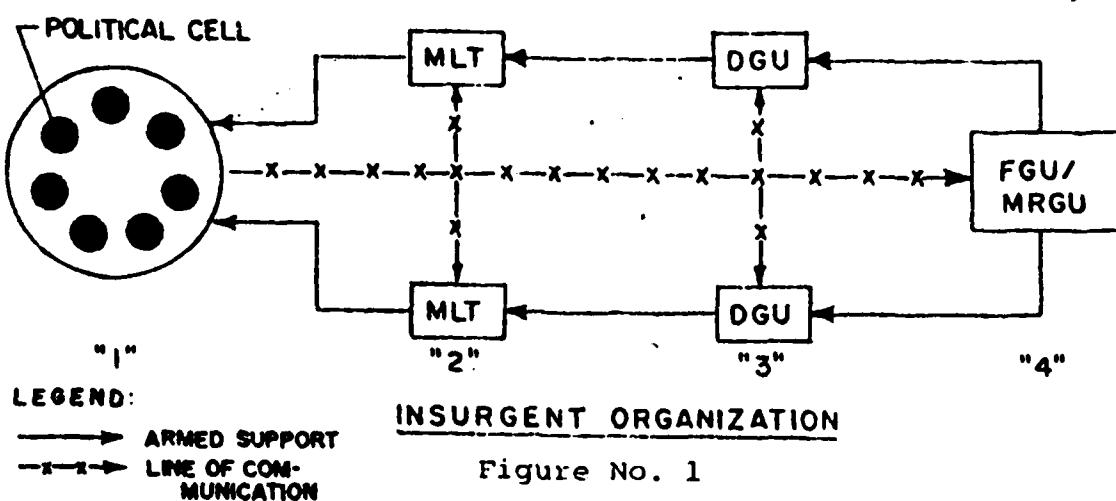


Figure No. 1

"1" represents the political underground infrastructure within the population in the different towns and cities of the province. The political cells or agents of the CPP (semi-legal teams, armed propaganda units, party branches, etc.) are primarily responsible for subversion propaganda, tax collection, repression and sabotage. They organize the people into mass organizations for employment in the united front effort. Importantly, they provide recruits, information, food and shelter and other supplies to the NPA guerrilla units at "2", "3" and "4". The operations of the political infrastructure is the blood giving life to the insurgency.

"2" represents the NPA militia which provides direct armed support to the political underground infrastructure. This unit with a strength of from 3-15 men operates in or around the barangays or towns.

"3" represents NPA district guerrilla units with average strengths of 30 men which are responsible for small-scale guerrilla actions against government forces within a guerrilla

district covering from 2 to 10 towns. They also provide direct armed support to the NPA militia and the political underground infrastructure.

"4" represents front or regional guerrilla units with strength varying from 100 to 300. Considered top rate units, the front or regional guerrilla units are responsible for carrying out small to large scale guerrilla attacks and ambuscades against government forces in one to three provinces. These units are the best armed of all guerrilla forces.

Figure one shows the dependence of NPA guerrilla units on the political underground infrastructure in the town or city. For as long as the political underground infrastructure exists within the population, the NPA guerrilla units are provided with all necessary support for their survival in the battlefield. Similarly, with the armed support of NPA guerrilla units, the political underground infrastructure is able to expand in the countryside, subverting one barangay to another. The continued existence of the underground political infrastructure will explain why communist insurgency grew steadily in the last 20 years despite government countermeasures directed principally at NPA guerrilla units. Since the political underground infrastructure remained untouched in the populated areas, it was able not only to replace the casualties suffered by guerrilla units, but also provide additional new recruits for new NPA guerrilla units. With the symbiotic relationship restored, i.e., the NPA guerrilla units supporting the political underground infrastructure and vice versa, the insurgency was able to develop additional political and military strength and expand to other areas.

Although Figure 1 shows that the underground political infrastructure within the population is somewhat separated from the NPA guerrilla units, particularly the militia, they are not so in actual practice. In the CPP-influenced and infiltrated barangays, the underground political infrastructure, the militia and even the larger NPA guerrilla units live with the population. In the CPP-targetted barangays and in the non-affected areas, while the underground political infrastructure is imbedded within the population, the NPA guerrilla units remain in close contact along the fringes of these areas ready to provide military support. In the case of Metropolitan Manila for instance, the armed city partisans (an NPA guerrilla unit) operate clandestinely from safehouses in the cities and towns of the metropolis or from support bases along the Bulacan and Cavite boundaries.

The activities of the underground political infrastructure and the NPA guerrilla units are closely coordinated and integrated by party committees organized in a hierarchical structure from the barangay to the territorial level (e.g., Northern Luzon). The members of these committees, excluding the section party committee responsible for grassroots operations, do not normally live with the population, except in areas under the CPP influence. However, at the grassroot level, i.e., barangays and even towns and cities, the members of the section party

committee remain with the population in order to maintain close contact with and provide direction to the underground political infrastructure. It is the responsibility of the section party committee to manage the cell system of the underground political infrastructure which includes the replacement of destroyed political cells and the upgrading of political cells on merit.⁷

The CTs have found the current socio-economic-political situation conducive to the progress of its movement. Its strategy includes both violent and non-violent actions. Taking advantage of the coup attempts, they have undertaken and continue to conduct tactical offensives. In the period from 28 August to 20 October 1987 alone, the CTs initiated 289 violent incidents which is 15% higher than the same time period immediately preceding. Significant increases were recorded in sabotage (667%), disarming of policemen and other persons in authority (100%), robbery and hold-ups (100%), landmining (50%), and ambuscades (48%). Casualties and firearms losses rose by 49% and 4% respectively.⁸

The CTs have intensified their sparrow operations in the National Capital Region (NCR) and other urban centers. These operations are so named because they are undertaken by the sparrow units of the NPA trained for liquidation jobs. Their missions aim to undermine the people's faith in the government's ability to maintain peace and order and to create an atmosphere of anarchy in the country. Since the aborted coup led by Gringo Honasan in August of 1987, they have launched 30 suspected sparrow operations which have resulted in the deaths of 16 soldiers, five policemen, four security guards and seven civilians. From January 1 to October 15 1987, the CTs were involved in 2,366 violent incidents all over the Philippines, 65% of which they initiated. The death toll was staggering: 525 soldiers, 179 policemen, 192 CHDF members, 743 civilians including 50 government

officials and 1,202 CTs. 268 CTs were captured.⁹

The NDF, on the other hand, in the middle of 1987 started a six year plan consisting of three two-year long phases to topple the government. The plan covers the duration of President Aquino's term of office. It calls for the assignment of NDF elements to key offices in the different government departments, to be followed by the infiltration of sensitive positions, and finally, the fielding of a national democratic front candidate for the presidential election in 1992.¹⁰ This is the basis of the military's perception that some of President Aquino's appointments are either communists or left-leaning. Those whom the military accuse of NDF ties always shrug off the accusation and hide behind the cloak of neo-nationalism. They may not be self-avowed communists now, the military says, but they are the ones susceptible to being used by the communists in their steps to power. Some of them have been detained before and charged of subversion and tie-up with communists by the military in military tribunals.

In a move to exploit the present situation, the Central Committee of the CPP issued a directive on 5 September 1987 to intensify military operations in order to cripple the AFP. Among the tasks assigned to the party cadres and insurgents are the following:

1. Hasten the establishment of combat formations which will be supported by the establishment of secondary forces in the district and municipal levels;
2. Form democratic political organs at higher levels and NDF organizations in the countryside and urban areas;
3. Prepare the revolutionary forces and the citizensry in the urban centers for both armed and non-armed struggle against the formation of a military dictatorship;
4. Intensify mass movements and develop the capability to stage mass actions that could lead to an uprising or rebellion;
5. Seize every opportunity to weaken the AFP forces; and
6. Map out contingency plan to counter the imposition of martial law or a state of emergency.¹¹

This directive explains the rash of insurgent activities in 1987. The CTs took every opportunity to stage ambuscades and sabotage while the military were busy fighting each other during the series of coup d'etats. Labor organizations were agitated to go on strikes. The increased price of fuel last year caused the drivers of public transportation to go on demonstrations and stage strikes. It is significant, however, to note that the CPP fears and anticipates that the instability it intends to create may precipitate a military dictatorship, or may force the government to declare martial law as Marcos did in 1972. Either of the two would be a nemesis to their long range plan. They would rather have the tolerance and permissiveness of the present government to continue.

The CPP continues to plan ahead. A three-year plan spelled out in a document captured last 16 September 1987 in Sta. Cruz, Zambales, revealed the following plan of the CPP/NPA in the next years:

1. Improve the NPA by organizing company-size formations and specialized units and acquiring high-powered firearms;
2. Organize wide-spread strikes, mobilize the workers for the revolution and form provisional groups for the revolutionary government.
3. Step up solidarity work abroad.¹²

This document of the CPP/NPA echoes the plan of the NDF earlier described. It indicates the growing confidence of the communists to carry out their ultimate plan to topple the present government by preparing to progress to the strategic offensive phase of their revolutionary movement. So far they have been cruising through the strategic defensive phase with limited tactical offensives. The stepped-up solidarity work abroad is intended to generate not only moral support, but financial and material support.¹³

A difference in the concept over the formation of provisional groups for the revolutionary government may surface between the CPP and the NDF as outlined by William Chapman.

There are, however, fragments of evidence that a genuine disagreement exists over policy between the NDF and the CPP Central Committee and that a tug-of-war has been underway for years over the shape of a social system that would follow a victory by insurgents. In 1986, NDF officials became quite explicit about the differences. In a remarkable magazine interview, the NDF's highest-ranking public spokesman, Satur Ocampo, defined the schism. The Communist Party, he said, "is a party with a socialist perspective.

That is, ultimately, the CPP intends to establish a socialist form of government and a society along Marxist-Leninist concept, with, of course, corresponding adjustments based on the specific characteristics of the national situation in the Philippines.

On the other hand, Ocampo explained, the NDF program embraced non-Marxist elements and openly welcome disparate groups, even big landlords who sympathized with the revolution. He thus drew a distinction between "national democrats" who believed in pluralism and the CPP which, he made clear, still hewed to the Marxist-Leninist line. One is left with the sense that a genuine ideological conflict over fundamentals was raging somewhere within the highest councils. One had no way of telling, however, which would prevail if it ever came to matter in the Philippines.¹⁴

The Secessionist Insurgents

The MNLF, which has broken up into three factions, has an estimated strength of 19,800 regulars with 10,600 firearms. Of the total regulars, about 15,930 belong to the Misuari faction. The MILF under Hashim Salamat has about 3,330 men equipped with 2,540 firearms. The MNLF reformist group under Dimasangkay Pundato has about 540 men with 480 firearms.¹⁵

The MNLF has been consolidating and strengthening its depleted and demoralized forces through massive recruitment and training. Since last year arms have arrived for their use as well as MNLF personnel trained abroad. They still are holding the government to the cessation -of-hostilities agreement. However, the government original-

ly understood this agreement on an ending of talks based on an autonomous region under the Philippine jurisdiction, but which Nur Misuari claims is an independent Muslim nation. To strengthen his position in the negotiation he is building up his arms and manpower. He is preparing for open hostilities in case the government fails to meet his demands. Reportedly there were firearms shipments delivered on September 30 and October 1 of 1987 in Tawi-Tawi.

The MNLF's strategy to pressure the government to grant its demand is to conduct terrorist activities in Mindanao as well as in Metro Manila, primarily targetting commercial establishments and public places. Misuari also plans to join forces with other revolutionary and political groups in the country to topple the Aquino Government, if these groups will recognize the MNLF's demand for autonomy for the 13 provinces in the south.¹⁶

Without foreign aid, the MNLF cannot sustain a protracted guerilla warfare. It primarily relies on its foreign benefactors in carrying out its armed struggle. Libya is its number one supporter. On October 20, 1987, Nur Misuari and his top aides were reported to have attended the Organization of Islam Conference to drum up support for full autonomy of Mindanao. Just like the NPAs, the secessionists are taking advantage of the government's tolerant and reconciliatory stance and the military's apparent disunity.¹⁷

The Military - The Armed Forces of the Philippines

Organization. The AFP is tasked primarily to secure the sovereignty and integrity of the national territory. Created by National Defense Act Nr. 1 in 1905, it has evolved to its present organization, which in 1987 had an authorized strength of 160,000. The mass media reports a strength of 250,000 but this includes the police force and

other paramilitary forces which are under the supervision of either the GHQ AFP or the Philippine Constabulary. The AFP is organized into a General Headquarters (GHQ) and four major services, namely: the Philippine Army (PA), the Philippine Constabulary (PC), the Philippine Air Force (PAF) and the Philippine Navy (PN). As tactical arms, the AFP maintains unified commands (UCs) and specified commands. There are two types of unified command. One is the Area Unified Command (AUC) and the other is Regional Unified Command (RUC). The difference between the two is the size of the area of operation. An AUC has a jurisdiction covering more than one administrative region of the country. The RUC has one region for its area of operation. There are three AUCs: the Northern Luzon Command, covering Regions 1 and 2; the Southern Luzon Command, covering Regions 4 and 5; and the Southern Command in Mindanao which includes Regions 9, 10, 11, and 12. Four RUCs secure Regions 3, 6, 7, and 8. The Western Command is a UC which has a province for its jurisdiction, the Palawan Islands, but it also has all the surrounding waters under its protection. The four specified commands are the PAF Security Command (PAFSECOM, formerly AVSECOM), the Clark Air Base Command (CABCOM), the Subic Command (SUBCOM), and the Narcotic Command (NARCOM).

The four major services vary in the manner by which they contribute and support the unified commands. The Philippine Army, whose main resources are organized into divisions and separate brigades, may either have a division, a separate brigade, a tactical brigade, a battalion or several battalions committed and attached to the UC commander. The PC, organized into regional commands (RCs) corresponding to the administrative divisions of the country, simply place

the RCs falling within the territorial jurisdiction of the AUC or RUC under its operational control. However, PC policy is for the RCs to continue to carry out their police functions within their regional jurisdiction. The PAF contributes Composite Air Strike Forces (CASFs) consisting of elements of COIN air assets. To facilitate the PAF supervision of the CASFs, the PAF maintains three Air Divisions one each in the three major divisions of the islands, namely Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The headquarters of these air divisions integrate air support to the RUCs and AUCs, not only with the CASFs' aircraft, but with general support air resources, such as airlift and fighter support, which normally are not detached from the PAF. The PN has the same concept of supporting the AUCs and RUCs. They have divided the country, however, into several naval districts from which the integration and support of naval efforts are controlled and monitored. The Philippine Marines (PM) normally augment the PA and the PC as ground combatant force.

A number of AFP-wide Service Support units also exist to support and provide services to the AUCs, RUCs, and the four major services. They are under the supervision of GHQ.

The total force committed to fight the insurgents include four separate infantry brigades, 23 tactical brigades, 87 maneuver battalions, 73 provincial commands (PC), 223 PC Companies and 7 PC Metropolitan District Commands (Metrodiscom). The PAF provide tactical air support as needed.

Capabilities of the AFP. The preceding description may give the impression that the AFP is substantially strong. However, the size and topography of the countryside where they must deploy to battle the insurgents spreads them so thin their operational effec-

tiveness is very much diminished. They suffer from other deficiencies. The maneuver battalions of the PA and the PM are on the average only 84% filled. The fill-up of the PC companies is much better at 95%. For lack of motorized vehicles, the mobility of the troops is only 25%. Tactical communication equipment fill-up is only around 47%. While the soldiers are all provided with M-16 rifles, crew-served weapons and artillery pieces are in much shorter supply than the desired. The best that could be given each individual soldier is only around 70% of the necessary combat clothing and individual equipment. Soldiers have to use part of their pay and allowances to provide some of the basic necessities for fighting. Considering that there are insufficient aircraft to provide air support to the ground troops, the PAF programmed flying time is further reduced by the constraint of a limited budget. The PAF has always overflowed its annual programmed flying hours, and GHQ has consistently supported the POL overconsumption. In 1987, out of all the aircraft in the PAF inventory, only about 65% are supportable by the approved budget.

The Philippine Navy is in almost the same predicament. Due to budgetary constraints it is operating fewer ships and small craft than are in the inventory. Moreover, the material readiness of most of their ships are marginal due to age and the very high cost of maintenance.

The Budgetary Problem of the AFP.¹⁷ The budget of the AFP has been the target of criticism from all sectors of Philippine society to include those who are now part of the leadership of the present government. Contrary to popular perception, the budget of the AFP has not increased in real terms despite the nominal increases observed. Records from 1972 to 1987 show that since 1974, the AFP percentage

share of the national budget has declined from 22.3% in 1974 to 7.2% in 1987. As a percentage of the GNP, the AFP buget has continuously declined, from 4.5% of GNP in 1976 to 1.25% in 1987. The average AFP share of the GNP in the last 15 years is 2.04%. These indicators show how much the AFP has endured in carrying out its tasks. More significantly, it explains the effect on operational readiness of military equipment and the poor fill-up in the basic equippage of the troops. Among the ASEAN nations, the Philippines has the least defense support per soldier. Brunei spends 28.4% more than the Philippines. In descending order, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand spend 6.8%, 3.3%, 2.9% and 2.2% more respectively.

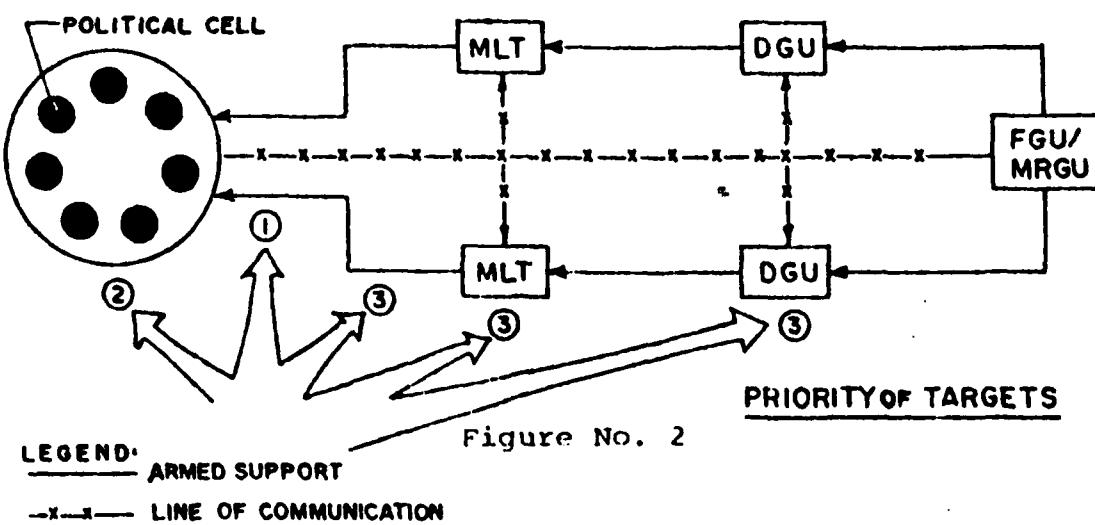
The Military Strategy to Combat the Insurgents. After the failure of the ceasefire and the peace negotiations between the government panel and the NDF, representing the CPP, the NPA and their front organizations on 30 January 1987, President Aquino directed the AFP to go after the hardcore communist rebels who refused to stack their arms and accept the government's offer of amnesty and reconciliation. As Commander in Chief of the AFP she exhorted her soldiers "to unsheathe the sword of war and give our nation a string of honorable victories."¹⁸

The AFP's response to her call was Letter of Instruction Number 01/87 codenamed Pagsubok. It was an AFP-wide operational directive which ordered major tactical offensive operations to be launched against suspected CPP/NPA strongholds in Regions 3, 4, and the NCR.¹⁹ LOI Pagsubok also directed all AFP forces in other regions to conduct limited tactical offensives in their respective areas of operations. Handcuffed for almost a year since the People's Revolution in February 1986, and uncertain on the gains of NPA consolidation efforts

conducted during the period of the ceasefire. The AFP began by making probes, concentrating first in the heartland of the insurgents: the Central Plains of Luzon (Region 3), the Laguna-Batangas-Quezon region (Region 4), and the National Capital Region (NCR) consisting of Metro Manila and the provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, and Rizal.

The results of the probes in Operations Pagsubok, and the guidance of the National Government embodied in the National Reconciliation and Development Program promulgated by Proclamation Number 80 and Executive Order Number 103, form the basis for the AFP Broad Front Strategy against the insurgents. The strategy unleashes "the military power against the purveyors of violence, at the same time keeping open the channels for dialogue and reconciliation with our rebel brothers who may choose to rejoin the rest of the Filipino nation in our quest for peace and prosperity.²⁰

The overall concept of the strategy is depicted in Figure 2. It envisions the destruction of the underground political organization of the CPP in the populated areas. The methodical plan calls for



targeting the lines of communication, such as the constant movement of couriers, "pasabilis" (fast pass), and supplies, on the fringes of populated areas, and between the populated areas and guerrilla bases in the mountains. When the link is severed, the next target should be the underground political organization in the populated area, including the section committee providing direction to operations of both the underground political organization and the NPA guerrilla units. After the underground political organization is neutralized, the NPA guerrillas will be the next target.²¹

Two programs are supposed to carry out the strategy.

The first program, city/town defense, is aimed at the protection of the population, the severance of the line of communication of the CPP in the city or town, and the destruction of the underground political infrastructure within the population in the city or town. The second program, military offensive, should seek to break the line of communication of the CPP between the city and town and the NPA guerrilla units in the outlying areas, and destroy or neutralize NPA guerrilla units isolated from the underground political infrastructure. To be successful, it is mandatory that both programs be mutually supporting.²²

The strategy appears well thought out and makes sense. Compared to the previous strategies, such as LOI Katatagan adopted in the last administration, it is more focused on the organization and modus operandi of the enemy. The grandiose strategies of the past played on words "to win the hearts and minds of the people", but put less direct efforts to protect them. Programs on civil relations and civic actions only made the people very reliant on the AFP, even for services that the other government agencies ought to provide and, thereby, diverting the AFP from its real tasks. Value formation activities made wrong premises and addressed the wrong targets. Targeting for the most part the soldiers and the lowly people, past strategies

assumed that they had bad and undesirable values and, therefore, should develop better one. In actuality it was the values of the leaders, wallowing in corruption and abuses, that were in question.

This chapter has described the current socio-economic-political situation in the Philippines. The whole climate indicates the continuing influence of the past. The insurgents have taken advantage of the effects of the incidents of the past and the present inadequacies of the government to strengthen their organization and capabilities. In the political sphere, however, significant developments show some rays of hope to improve the socio-economic situation. President Aquino has finally decided to deal more strongly with the insurgents although she still keeps the door open for peaceful solution. The military on the other hand is trying another strategy to combat the insurgents. Without full knowledge of the current strategy, other than that contained in available sources, I hope the strategy provides guidance for increasing military presence in the rural areas. The insurgents in the past have been more visible than government troopers. At times, the people in the areas have been made to believe that the NPA guerrillas are really in control. Hence, their forced cooperation.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Analyses

Insurgency in the Philippines became more complex because of the accumulation of factors which muddled the issues that initially caused it. From the Central Plains of Luzon where its roots started, the problem has spread to almost encompass the whole country. From the simple violations of the rules of relations between landlord and tenant, the causes have taken much more complex dimensions, brought about by social, political, and economic developments from within and outside of the Philippines.

The Root Cause. Insurgency is not new to the Philippines. Filipinos fought the same type of warfare against their colonizers: Spain, the United States, and Japan. The root cause of the original version of the insurgency started with the historical incident of the Spaniards arriving in the Philippines, christianizing the Filipinos while limiting their education, appropriating great vast of agricultural lands for the Spanish settlers and the religious friars, and enslaving the Filipinos who once communally tilled the lands. Just as the winds of nationalism had gained momentum in Europe with the French Revolution, its sparks reached the nationalists in the colonies and lit the fire of their dream of independence. Unconsciously, however, the economic system that was established by the early settlers and religious friars was passed on to and was nurtured by their descendants who comprised but a small percentage of the native Filipinos. They were the ones who perpetuated the inequities of land distribution for centuries. Their landholdings became the sources of wealth used in later changes

in the economic system and their source of power in the political development of the country. From among these propertied class came the politicians during the pre-independence and post-independence periods. Their protective actions to preserve their economic status prevented the legislation that could narrow the inequities in Filipino society.

But the gap between the rich and the poor is not totally the cause of the problem. As in the case of the landlord and the tenant in Central Luzon, social investigation reveals that farmers were happy and content with the relationship with their landlords in the past because the landlords provided some degree of economic security for them. There may have been some unfairness in the crop sharing by present standards, but this was more than made up by the readiness and willingness of their landlords to provide emergency sustenance during periods of calamities and poor harvests or other assistance such as medicines and financial loans without interest. Conflicts arose when these arrangements were broken because descendants who took over the management of the farms applied the business practice of charging interest and required payments for assistance rendered.¹

Added to these violations of the existing rules in the relationship were the agitation by agents of a foreign country with the objective to spread its ideology of communism. The result is an insurgency problem.

Political Ramifications of the Problem. Insurgency in the Philippines is a social problem caused by inequities in the economic status of the people. It has become more complex because past political actions either sidestepped the causes or were palliative in nature due to inadequate resources to sustain and institutionalize corrective pro-

grams. Furthermore, political solutions failed to consider that a counterforce such as the communists would make use of any failure or detectable bad intentions for propaganda. There had been examples in the past where government mismanagement, oligarchic plunder, and shoddy foreign borrowings were used as propaganda to discredit the existing government. The Marcos regime is one example. It would be the highest state of naivete' for any Philippine government to ignore leftist-leaning critics who highlight alleged government malpractices, even if they were not true. Propaganda has attained its objective if the message has been communicated and not challenged.

Past Philippine governments, even before Marcos, planned development programs oriented towards insuring the continuance of the party or the person in power. When the economic programs are designed to attain political objectives, they tend to have a short gestation in order to attain early impact. As such, these programs have temporary and fleeting values that will not contribute to a lasting solution to the problem being addressed. Many of these programs are inefficient and lead to wasteful spending. Furthermore, they are vulnerable to graft and corruption.

In the sphere of government, changes in structure and systems were attempted but apparently failed. The cause of failure was not because the system was inappropriate, but because the defects were with the policy implementors whose motivations were far from desirable. Cases of graft and corruption were not fully investigated and punished because justice was made a plaything by those who were in the positions of power. This has created the environment for the grievances, and the resultant disenchantments and dissatisfactions made the cause of

the insurgents acceptable to the masses.

Economic Reforms. All the economic programs in the past intended to emancipate the sector of Philippine society vulnerable to the insurgent propaganda worked in a limited manner because of several reasons. A number of land reform programs had been attempted in the past that were either very expensive to undertake; fraught with so many technical difficulties such as land valuation, a compensation plan for the landowners, and payment schemes by the grantee farmers; or there were more farmers than there were lands that could be distributed in sizable and economic lots. The reforms continued to be effective only as long as the government was capable of supporting the transportation cost of the farmers and their families, providing the initial tools and seeds to help the relocated farmers turn new farms into a paying concern, and provide security to the new relocated homestead colonies. This last item became necessary in the later phase of the program when the resettled farmers ran into conflict with the Muslim population who resented the Christian Filipinos' arrival.

Raising productivity of the land became a primary objective also, but it met with some social and technical difficulties. There were limits to the productivity of small plots. Arranging marketing, credit, irrigation, and other problems which could have been easily solved through the system of cooperatives, proved difficult because of lack of education and preparation of the farmers for such undertaking. In many cases, the unscrupulous rich and business merchants took advantage of the farmers.

In order to decongest the rural areas of farmers with little or no land to till, the policy of opening jobs in the cities was adopted.

Proponents of this policy were entrepreneurs and industrialist who believed that economic development could be accelerated through industrialization. Adopting this policy, the government rerouted financial resources destined for the agricultural sectors to the job-rich industrial enterprises. While a number of these enterprises actually created employment opportunities, many ventures ran aground because of mismanagement, graft and corruption in the government agencies responsible for monitoring the activities, and the simple ineptness of those running the new enterprises whose only credentials were their connections with government authorities. Industrialization caused multitudes from the rural areas to flock to the urban centers which then became congested. Far more complex social problems, such as unsanitary squatter colonies, drug additions, child prostitution and other crimes, emerged in the congested urban centers. All these problems fell right into the scheme of the radical left to attract to their side the many cause-oriented groups that sprouted to champion the lot of the masses.

The US and Other Countries' Influence. As a developing nation, the Philippines is just as vulnerable as any other country to any upheaval in the socio-economic-political spheres. The vulnerabilities began as early as the first foreigners stepped on Philippine soils to stay and supplant the traditional value and way of life.

The Spaniards were the first group of foreigners and they left the most lasting legacy of religion and the hacienda economy. The economic heritage had the most profound impact and was the primary causative factor for the economic ills in contemporary times. This system laid the fundamentals for the great disparity in the level of life between the rich and the poor which characterises Philippine

society.

The American legacy which followed the Spanish developed a political system and introduced an educational system, but maintained the economic system already established by their predecessors. While Spain ruled for a little less than 400 years, the American regime lasted only for a little less than 50 years. The Americans however had the most influences on phases of Filipino life. Seemingly benevolent and generous in their policies towards the Philippines, these same policies continued to be guided by their national interests and their business group's interests. The grant of independence was expedited by "American beet lobbies opposed to Philippine sugar, dairy lobbies opposed to coconut oil, and labor lobbies opposed to Filipino immigrant labor."² These economic factions were furthermore aided by the "isolationists and the power realists fearful of Japan, a new generation of anti-imperialists by party or principle, and others who might be called emancipatory gradualists, disinterested persons who simply believed that 'that time had come' for an independent Philippines."³

The US granted Philippine independence in 1946, at most inopportuned time after the Second World War when the Philippines was in shambles, the economy shattered and the population divided over the issue of collaboration by those who served the Japanese-sponsored government. Whether intended by design or not, Filipinos' preoccupation with rehabilitating the nation enabled the Americans to secure agreement to three bases of post-war relations, namely, the Parity Rights Amendment to the 1935 Constitution, the Bell Trade Act, and the Military Bases Agreement. The second agreement was tied to the first which granted the same right to Americans as Filipinos in the ownership and

exploitation of natural resources. In return, trade preference for Philippine products that was supposed to terminate in 1946 was extended to 1974 on the rationale that the Philippines needed it for stabilized recovery. All these agreements were clearly a recipe for prolonged semi-colonial association to confine the independence granted to the sovereign legal sense of the word. But even sovereignty was infringed upon by the investment rights granted to the Americans and the extra-territorial jurisdiction granted to the bases. The nature of this relationship became the dominant theme of all the cooperative undertakings by both governments, except that the Filipinos always ended up on the short end of the bargain. This is best exemplified in the field of military cooperation.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has been organized and trained on the same pattern and orientation as the United States Armed Services. This is not unexpected as the AFP has been trained and advised by Americans for many years and is equipped with American-made weapons. Its effectiveness, therefore, is liable to diminish if it is not supported as well as it should ordinarily be. The AFP is deficient in logistic support because of overdependence on the Americans, whose generosity depends very much to the degree of cooperation between the US and the Philippine governments. During the Marcos regime the size of the aid package depended in large degree on the extent of Marcos' subservience to the American government's bidding. The US efforts to depose General Noriega of Panama are similar to the squeeze placed on Marcos. Luckily for Panama, they do not face a problem of insurgency.

Conclusions

The insurgency problem is both real and imminent. The Muslim

rebel secessionists are not yet formidable, but the communist insurgents have evolved into a threat much stronger and more determined than their forerunners, the Huks and the HMBs.

The nature, characteristics and dynamics of insurgency in the Philippines are so complicated no single solution can do the job. It needs a simultaneous socio-economic-political solutions with the military providing the stability through loyal and cooperative effort to confront the armed component of the conflict. Socially, the government may have to put up both long and short term programs along with educational systems to encourage active participation in government. Politically, the government should address its weaknesses in order to strengthen its structure to protect and serve the people. Economically, the government should look for more workable solutions to equally distribute the fruits of development. Militarily, the AFP should study its present mission, organization, and strategy to counter the strategies and tactics of its enemies.

In the field of foreign relations, the Philippine government should restudy its foreign policies and assess the current relationship with the United States in order to attain full nationhood and regain self-respect.

Recommendations

Military Actions. While military actions will not solve insurgency totally, the AFP can, however, face the NPA and the Muslim rebels in such a way as to demobilize their capabilities to expand influence beyond the areas that they have now attained. The CPP/NPA strategy of protracted war calls for the war to drag on to enable it to build its forces so that it will be difficult for the AFP to defeat

it strategically. In 1969 when it was first organized, the NPA had only nine original squads with only 35 assorted rifles and handguns. It has now opened 60 guerrilla fronts and base areas in the countryside, with an estimated strength of 23,000 armed regulars. The National Democratic Front, the front organization of the CPP, was just a skeleton organization in the early 70s. Now it has even attracted into its ranks influential members of the clergy, the business community, members of media, politicians, teachers, and other strategic sectors of society. The AFP, therefore, has to act now. Obviously, the government should put emphasis on military actions.

Lt Colonel Victor Corpus, once a rebel himself and now working in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in GHQ, recommends undertaking a "WAR OF QUICK DECISION" intended to destroy the NPA in the next two or three years. The AFP Broad Front Strategy described earlier has not been explicit in the actions to be taken and has not considered the overall strategy of the CPP/NPA. Corpuz's master plan uses the operational and organization techniques of the NPA as the basis for the offensives he envisions the AFP must take. If there are 60 NPA base areas nationwide, the AFP should determine the major and most advanced CPP/NPA base areas and carryout simultaneous offensive operations against them until all principal enemy bases are dismantled and the main guerrilla forces in those base areas are decisively defeated.

His master plan calls for two major phases:

The first phase involves general preparation which includes reorganization, retraining and reorientation, and getting rid of the unnecessary baggage in the organization.

The second phase is the launching of simultaneous and sustained campaigns against all guerrilla fronts

and base areas nonstop until all the principal enemy bases are dismantled and their main forces in each given area are defeated and destroyed.⁴

A major recommendation in his plan calls for the reorganization of the ground combatant forces. He advocates the primary COIN organization be the Commando Brigade which shall be composed of commando battalions, the number of which in each brigade will depend on the geographic size of the enemy base area. This concept of organization resembles the COIN AFP units in the 1950s when the battalion combat teams (BCTs) successfully conducted operations against the Huks. They were sustained by support from the main base camps known as military areas (Army) and constabulary zones (PC). To describe the operational tactics would belabor the point. It will suffice to say that this plan improves on the "search and destroy" and "clear and hold" strategy adopted before which made the government forces vulnerable to ambuscades and their small holding detachments subject to annihilating attacks.

In addition, as part of military reforms, the military should address the eradication of service parochialism. This is necessary to facilitate cooperation among the four armed services. The interservice rivalry in the past prevented rational long and short range planning that resulted in disjointed growth of the services. For example, the PA and the PC have grown so big, the PAF and the PN could not support their air and naval support requirements for joint operations.

Present doctrines have to be studied and rewritten to conform to the changes in the organization restructuring. Future doctrines should emphasize jointness in thinking and actions.

Non-military Actions. The Philippine Government has for a long time accepted the fact that a military solution will not totally eradicate insurgency. The ideological underpinnings of the conflict are the domain of the civilian government. There were attempts in the past that could have gained some measures of success. Insincere and vicious political motivations have clouded the gains that were attained.

To strengthen the social system, the government should preempt the cause-oriented groups, with their rallied masses forcing the government to react to their demands, by formulating workable policies based on complete social investigation to correct social inequities. Where demands are not attainable immediately the government should communicate the truth instead of promising or making evasive replies to preserve its popularity that only cause more dissatisfaction and generate rising expectations.

Economic policies should address the gap between the rich and the poor. This is most important as this is the fundamental cause of the insurgency problem. As the government encourages the private sector to grow, it should be made to absorb more burdens, either by way of higher taxes or voluntary assistance to the masses.

The judicial system should be strengthened. The full force of the law should be applied to all violators. Government officials from the President down to the lowliest civil servant should be subject to the same standards of treatment.

Present foreign policies should be restudied. Special relationship with countries that advance the attainment of our national interests should be sought and continued. Others that impinge on the

exercise of sovereignty be renegotiated to correct them.

The Filipinos in the final analysis will determine their future. They have had lessons in the past which placed most of them where they are today. They will have to decide on the manner by which they would like to go and what they want to be. Someone said before that the people deserves the kind of government they elect. On the Filipino people, therefore, depend the successful pursuit of above recommendations as they are the one to select the people who will formulate and carry out the policies.

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